

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NEA PUBLICATION - URANIUM RESOURCES PRODUCTION
AND DEMAND

REF: PARIS 4832

1. SUMMARY OF NEA PUBLICATION ON URANIUM RESOURCES AND
COMMENTS ABOUT IT PROVIDED IN REFTEL WERE OF GREAT INTERES
TO THIS EMBASSY. IF AVAILABLE WE WOULD APPRECIATE
RECEIVING COPY OF THE REPORT ITSELF. AS NOTED IN REFTEL
SPAIN IS ONE OF LEADING NUCLEAR ENERGY COUNTRIES AT
PRESENT.

2. WHILE WE HAVE NO BASIS TO JUDGE OVERALL THRUST OF
COMMENTS ON THE REPORT (REFTEL), WE WOULD NOTE THE
FOLLOWING POINTS. FIRST, AS FAR AS EMBASSY AWARE SPAIN
IS NOT "ORDERING AND PLANNING NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS FOR
DELIVERY IN THE POST 1988 PERIOD" (PARA. 5 REFTEL). AT
PRESENT THE NATIONAL ENERGY PLAN FOR 1977-1987 PERIOD IS
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UNDER REVISION AND STUDY BY INTER-MINISTERIAL GROUP AND
WILL LATER BE SUBMITTED TO CORTES (LEGISLATURE) FOR
DEBATE. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT YET SEEN REVISED PLAN
WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE WILL PROBABLY BE SUBSTANTIAL
REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF NUCLEAR PLANTS TO BE BUILT BEFORE
1987 (ABOUT 13 INSTEAD OF PREVIOUSLY PLANNED 18 TO 20).
IN ANY CASE THERE ARE NO KNOWN PLANS FOR POST 1988

PERIOD.

3. SECOND, IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH SPANISH OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN THE NUCLEAR ENERGY PROGRAM WE HAVE NOTED MORE CONCERN WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF SPAIN'S BECOMING DEPENDENT UPON SOME TYPE OF URANIUM SUPPLIERS GROUP (SIMILAR TO OPEC) THAN WITH FEAR OF TOTAL EXHAUSTION OF URANIUM RESERVES. SINCE APPARENTLY NEITHER U.S. NOR OTHERS (SUCH AS INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION) CAN PROVIDE GUARANTEE OF PRICE FOR FUTURE SUPPLIES OF URANIUM TO SPAIN, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT NO ASSURANCE OF "RELIABLE" SUPPLY CAN BE GIVEN IF PRICE IS CONSIDERED ONE INGREDIENT OF RELIABILITY.

4. THIRD, SPANISH OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD EMBASSY THAT THEIR PLANS INCLUDE DEVELOPMENT OF "FULL NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE" WITH CONTINUED RESEARCH ON REPROCESSING AND FAST BREEDER REACTORS. HOWEVER, FIRST FAST BREEDERS FOR COMMERCIAL USE WOULD NOT BE BUILT UNTIL MID-1990'S AT EARLIEST. REFTEL REFERS TO ERRONEOUS INTERPRETATION OF NEA STUDY AS "CALL FOR EARLY INTRODUCTION OF ADVANCED REACTOR SYSTEMS" BUT THERE IS NO CLARIFICATION OF WHAT IS MEANT BY "EARLY". SPANISH HAVE VOICED DOUBTS THAT ALTERNATE FUEL CYCLES WITH BETTER NON-PROLIFERATION FEATURES CAN BE DEVELOPED OVER NEXT 10-15 YEARS. STABLER

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